

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

NEA-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 USIA-15 TRSE-00

MBFR-03 SAJ-01 H-03 NSC-10 SS-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 OMB-01

AEC-11 AECE-00 RSR-01 /153 W
----- 012057

P R 201755Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6423

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USNMR SHAPE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, GW, US

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S PRESS CONFERENCE

JULY 19

1. SUMMARY: IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS RETURN FROM WASHING-
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TON JULY 19, FRG DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER HELD A LONG

PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE GAVE A PERSONAL REVIEW OF HIS VISIT. WHILE HE WAS CLEARLY ACTING IN PART TO END PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND CONCERN ABOUT THE US-FRG DEFENSE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD PRESS COMMENT IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF HIS CONVERSATIONS ON THREE MAJOR TOPICS: THE US-SOVIET NUCLEAR AGREEMENT, THE NATO-WP BALANCE, AND THE PENTAGON STUDY. IN ADDITION TO REAFFIRMING THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSE US-FRG TIES, LEBER ALSO CALLED FOR CONTINUED DEFENSE EFFORTS IN THE FACE OF THE BUILD-UP OF WARSAW PACT FORCES. HE SOUNDED A THEME OF UTMOST CONFIDENCE IN THE US AND IN THE MUTUALITY OF US-FRG SECURITY INTERESTS. SOURCES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TOLD US THAT THE PRESS CONFERENCE REFLECTED MINISTER LEBER'S TRUE PERSONAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH US OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL: LEBER WAS OBVIOUSLY MUCH PLEASED WITH THE TREATMENT HE RECEIVED IN WASHINGTON AND WITH THE RESULTS OF HIS TALKS WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER, DR. KISSINGER AND FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE LAIRD. HE CALLED HIS VISIT ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL HE HAD EVER EXPERIENCED. EXPRESSING GREAT SATISFACTION THAT THE CONVERSATIONS ALLOWED IN-DEPTH COVERAGE OF ALL MATTERS OF CONCERN TO THE GERMANS, HE SAID THE VISIT CONTRIBUTED TO THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ALLIANCE AND THE BUILDING OF CONFIDENCE. HE STATED: "THE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS MEETING, ITS FRANKNESS, THE CAREFUL, THOUGHTFUL ANSWERS WHICH WERE GIVEN TO OUR QUESTIONS, AVE ME THE IMPRESSION THAT THE US HAS CONFIDENCE IN US." THE WORD OF THE US, HE SAID, IS TRUSTWORTHY AND CORRESPONDS TO AMERICA'S INTERESTS.

3. EAST-WEST MILITARY BALANCE: LEBER SAID HE HAD COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN THE INFORMATION HE RECEIVED IN WASHINGTON ABOUT THE EAST-WEST MILITARY BALANCE. NOTING THIS INFORMATION CONFIRMED THE BUILD-UP OF WP FORCES, HE EMPHASIZED THIS IS A CAUSE FOR CONCERN TO THE WEST, BUT REJECTED THE IDEA THAT WP FORCES ARE SUPERIOR TO NATO. NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN THE SIZE OF WP FORCES, HE THOUGHT THAT LARGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NATO FORCES WILL BE NECESSARY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE BALANCE OF POWER MUST NOT, HE SAID, BE CHANGED TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE WEST. WITH RESPECT TO THE INFORMATION ON THE MILITARY BALANCE MADE AVAILABLE TO HIM IN WASHINGTON, LEBER STATED: "I AM NOT EXAGGERATING WHEN I SAY THAT SINCE I HAVE BEEN DEFENSE MINISTER, AND EVEN BEFORE THAT, THE US HAS NEVER BEEN SO OPEN WITH AN ALLIANCE PARTNER AS IT WAS FOR SEVERAL

HOURS YESTERDAY AFTERNOON."

4. US-SOVIET NUCLEAR AGREEMTN: LEBER INDICATED HE WAS COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE ASSURANCES HE RECEIVED CONCERNING THE NUCLEAR AGREEMENT. HE SAID THE ALLIANCE STRATEGY HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY THE AGREEMENT AND IT WILL IN FACT LESSEN THE LIKELIHOOD OF SURPRISE ATTACKS. STATING THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE ALLIANCE'S AIMS WILL IN ANY WAY BE NEGATIVELY AFFECTED, HE STRESSED THAT THE STRATEGY OF DETERRENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF UNCALCUABILITY WILL REMAIN UNTOUCHED. HE SAID: "THE AGREEMENT IS VALID UP TO THE MOMENT THAT FORCE IS USED. AT THE MOMENT FORCE IS USED EITHER AGAINST THE US OR A NATO PARTNER, THE AGREEMENT IS NO LONGER

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VALID." LEBER ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE AIM OF THE AGREE-
MENT IS TO DEVELOP A MEANS TO AVOID ARMED CONFLICT;
HOWEVER, "AFTER THE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES BY MEANS
OF A MILITARY ATTACK, INCLUDING A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK,
THE AGREEMENT IS BROKEN AND THERE NO LONGER EXISTS AN
OBLIGATION TO CONSULT DURING THE CONFLICT." AFTER AN
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ATTACK, THE WESTERN ALLIANCE WOULD BE COMPLETELY FREE
TO USE WHATEVER MEANS ARE NECESSARY TO DEFEND ITSELF.

5. PENTAGON STUDY: LEBER ALSO DEALT AT LENGTH WITH THE
PENTAGON STUDY, STRESSING THE HYPOTHETICAL NATURE OF
MUCH OF THE WORK AND THAT SUCH STUDIES WERE ONLY AN AID
TO DECISION MAKING. HE EXPLAINED THAT THERE IS NO SINGLE
PENTAGON STUDY, AND THAT THE WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE
REFERRED IN FACT TO A GROUP OF ONGOING STUDIES BY
EXPERTS ABOUT THE EAST-WEST MILITARY BALANCE. IT WOULD
BE A MISTAKE, HE SAID, TO ATTRIBUTE TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE
TO SUCH PROJECTS, BECAUSE THE WORK IS UNFINISHED AND
HYPOTHETICAL IN NATURE. IN ANY CASE, HE HAD BEEN PROM-
ISED THAT WHEN THE STUDIES ARE COMPLETED, US
AND FRG MILITARY SPECIALISTS WILL MEET TO DISCUSS THE
DETAILS OF ITS METHODOLOGY AND STUDY CONCLUSIONS.
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